

BUDGET STRETCHING IDEAS

Cutting The Cost Of Fun

(NAPSA)—There are a number of ways to squeeze plenty of fun into a tightening budget.

That may be particularly good news for the 72 percent of Americans that the marketing research group NPD says play some type of video game. For many consumers, a \$60 game played on a console has become a luxury they are learning to do without. But now online gaming may help change that.

An increasing number of games are available over the Internet for play on PCs, and they could offer a number of money-saving benefits. For instance, in addition to there being no CDs or game cartridges to lose or scratch, Web-game users don't have to commit to buying a game until they've played it and know they're interested. There are also no late fees from rented games, and if the player loses interest in a game or completes it altogether, there are a seemingly infinite number of new games from which to choose without having to spend \$60.

Additionally, many online gaming companies offer options such as try before you buy, monthly gaming subscriptions or even virtual currency called WildCoins, which allows consumers to pay for game play on a per-session basis. These options mean consumers can often spend the same amount or even less playing multiple titles than they would have typically paid for a single boxed console game.



The Web could save video game fans some serious cash.

Ad-sponsored game play is also emerging as a popular option, giving gamers almost endless free play in exchange for watching a short 15-second video ad while their game loads. WildTangent, one of the largest online game companies, uses its WildCoins virtual currency to offer subscribers play-to-own privileges on any game. Gamers can apply the money spent on their game sessions toward the purchase of the full game.

For players, it can all add up to less money spent on games—and a smaller price tag on fun. For more information, visit www.wildtangent.com.